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ABSTRACT

This article provides suggestions for improving community college English teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward teaching-learning situations. The author contends that, in order for a college English instructor to fully realize his or her optimal self and enhance the experience of the student, teachers should: (1) read professional literature in their subject matter and about the skill of teaching; (2) provide a stimulating learning environment consisting of critical and creative thinking activities; (3) interact with other instructors to develop the best curriculum possible; (4) attend state and national conventions pertaining to teaching English; (5) engage in team teaching; (6) plan a program of inservice education for the entire school year, which details and emphasizes specific goals the instructor wishes to attain; (7) conduct research as a plan of inservice growth; and (8) pursue an advanced degree at a nearby university. Appropriate means of implementing inservice programs and goals such as these need to be pursued so that community college students may experience the best curriculum possible in English. Contains 11 references. (AS)

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Improving English Instruction in the Community College

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IMPROVING ENGLISH INSTRUCTION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Community college teachers of English need to upgrade their teaching skills continuously. More is demanded from these instructors than ever before. The lay public expects students to be highly literate and employable (Ediger, 1997, 145). Professionals in English instruction have an inward desire to achieve, grow, and develop. A quality curriculum must be in the offing for all community college students. What might the English teacher do to improve knowledge, skills, and attitudes in teaching-- learning situations?

Inservice Education

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of students should be developed toward optimal achievement. These skills are in continuous development throughout the life span of the individual (Ediger, 1998, 1-14). They need to be nurtured in the community college English curriculum as a basic for all to develop. English instructors then must plan objectives, learning opportunities to attain these ends, as well as appraise to notice if goals have been attained (Ediger, 1996, 3-25). Listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills permeate all academic areas as well as form a body of knowledge of their very own . What might the community college English instructor do to realize more fully the optimal self?

He/she should do much reading of professional literature in the subject matter and the skills of teaching. A vast amount of literature is available to assist the instructor to enrich the self as well as becoming increasingly professional as an instructor. The college library contains many excellent professional journals and textbooks which provide content for reading. Ideas gleaned might well become a part of the objectives stressed in teaching- learning situations. A rich background of subject matter and needed skills in teaching may provide students

with an exciting learning environment. Boredom and repetition have no place in the English curriculum. Rather, students need to experience a stimulating learning environment consisting of critical and creative thinking opportunities. Students also must be guided in problem solving activities. English as an academic discipline can indeed be very fascinating to students where excitement, challenge, and motivation to learn are optimal. Thus the English instructor needs to read professional literature to increase competency in the curriculum (Ediger, 1995, 246-251).

Second, the English instructor should interact freely with other instructors to develop the best curriculum possible. By talking to and with other professionals, the English instructor may evaluate ideas read and secure new content form colleagues. Learning is ongoing and is never completely realized. The English teacher must take advantage in talking with colleagues to share, receive, and modify ideas presently held pertaining to the profession of teaching English. An inward desire to improve the English curriculum should be a major goal of all professionals (Ediger, 1995, 172-174).

Community college English teachers should attend an ample number of state and national conventions pertaining to teaching English. At these meetings, instructors should attend meetings which guide in improving instruction. Generally, there are many different sessions from which to select for attendance. The sponsoring institution should pay for all reasonable costs for attending. Here, the community college is investing in improving English instruction, a truly noble goal. Continual inservice education is a must (Ediger, 1996, 221-225)!

Community college instructors may grow as professionals when engaging in team teaching. Team teaching stresses two or more instructors planning cooperatively the objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal procedures for a given set of students. By sharing ideas in planning, instructors might well learn from each other through built in inservice education. Instructors may observe each other teach in large group sessions. Peer evaluation can follow in appraising the quality of

instruction. In small group work and individual student endeavors, community college instructors may get to know students better and be able to provide for individual differences among learners more effectively. Optimal student achievement is a must (Ediger, 1995, 114-117).

Individual instructors need to plan a program of inservice education for the entire school year. The plan should be in detail and emphasize specific goals the instructor wishes to attain. The focal point of the activities inside the plan should be to increase knowledge and skills in teaching. Quality attitudes should be a by product of learning. Members of the English division should establish definite standards that each faculty member should meet when an instructor decides upon what to do for inservice growth and development in a given school year. Thus the individual plan harmonizes with the standards or criteria determined by the English division. Each plan for inservice achievement needs to be challenging and yet achievable so that quality instruction in the classroom will be an end result (Ediger, 1994, 169-174).

Community college English instructors may conduct research as a plan of inservice growth. The research conducted leads to increased professionalism of instructors. Experimental studies may be conducted with a treatment group experiencing the new method of teaching while the control group experiences the more traditional procedure of instruction. A pre and post test should be given to both groups to notice if students experiencing the new procedure of teaching attain more than does the control group. Random sampling of students in the study needs to be emphasized. Tests used in the pre and post testing must have high validity and reliability. The study being made must have high significance in improving the community college English curriculum. The review of literature pertaining to the study made should reveal effort, competence, and be comprehensive. Bibliography entries from the review of literature directly related to the study should reveal depth study and scholarliness. Descriptive surveys and correlational studies may also be conducted by teams or individual English instructors. Research

efforts should definitely improve the community college English curriculum (Ediger, 1996, Educational Resources Information Center).

Community college English instructors may pursue an advanced degree at a nearby university. The advanced degree should assist the instructor to improve instruction. An ideal is for the instructor to achieve a PH.D. degree in English. Continuous inservice education is a must. Attending an accredited university which offers advanced degrees in English offers quality opportunities to grow, develop, and achieve. Each instructor should avail themselves of the opportunity to take additional course work in English. Opportunities come and go. If an instructor does not take advantage of the opportunities available in life, they may not be there at a later time. High motivation and ambition in life are necessary so that instruction increases in quality Ediger, 1995, Chapters One and Two).

In Closing

Community college English instructors need to avail themselves of opportunities to increase proficiency in teaching. There are numerous ways to emphasize inservice education. Appropriate means of implementing inservice programs need to be in the offing so that students in community colleges may experience the best curriculum possible in English.

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